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ATTEMPTS AT SOLUTIONS OF HUMAN ILLNESS PROBLEMS
ASSOCIATED WITH EXPOSURE OF PERSONS WORKING
WITH PROPARGITE (OMITE)

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Late in 1975, our survey of human illness exposure problems to propargite (Omite) was drawing to a close and it was becoming apparent that the major problem was the very dusty nature of Omite 30W. When a user attempted to move this pesticide from its container into the mix tank, if it contacted skin, particularly sweaty skin or eyes, severe irritation was a common aftermath in a number of people.

The Department reached the conclusion that this safety hazard should be removed before this product was offered for sale in California in 1976. It was also determined that data was needed immediately as to whether propargite was a skin sensitizer. The Environmental Protection Agency was notified of these concerns and of the Department's plan to schedule an office hearing with the Uniroyal Corporation, the registrant of Omite 30W, concerning these problems.

The hearing was held by the Department, and the Uniroyal officials offered full cooperation with the Department's requirement for immediately developing a safer product should registration be desired for a similar product for 1976.

The registrant assigned several staff members with a charge to attempt rapid resolution of the problems. They conducted an independent field survey of the problems. They considered several new types and sizes of containers, including water-soluble packets, for a wettable powder. They prepared six new wettable powder formulations with decreased amounts of dustiness over the currently registered Omite 30W. They explored the possibilities of the use of liquid formulations only. They considered the value of changes in label instructions and a safety education program. They contracted with a biological testing laboratory to carry out a skin sensitization study in guinea pigs. Field degradation of residues on plant foliage were planned.

A number of subsequent meetings were held with Uniroyal officials late in 1975 and early in 1976 as the problems were resolved.

All Omite 30W manufactured prior to December 1, 1975 was withdrawn from sale and removed from California. A new formulation of Omite 30W with negligible dustiness characteristics was proposed for use in California in 1976. This was achieved by a trade-secret change in the formulation process. This

change was studied by the Department and the Environmental Protection Agency and was considered as being so minor as not needing extensive review. New burst-proof bags were put into use that have to be emptied in such a way that minimizes dusting problems. A series of dinner meetings were held by the registrant in the major use areas at which an overall safe-use-of-pesticides program was presented. Field men were detailed by the registrant to monitor major users for any problems with the altered product and the new containers. Plans for field residue studies on foliage to be conducted by the registrant in 1976 proceeded. Field evaluation of new experimental liquid formulations began.

Although it is too early to reach final conclusions, so far no human illness attributable to exposure to Omite 30W are known to have occurred in 1976. The formulation in use has negligible dusting problems in the field and as a side benefit goes into solution in the mix tank much quicker than did the Omite 30W that was previously used.

We will continue to monitor the use of products that contain propargite for possible human illness problems.